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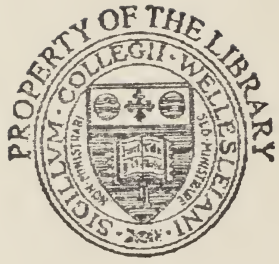
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MEXICAN MUSIC

NOTES BY HERBERT WEINSTOCK FOR

CONCERTS ARRANGED BY

CARLOS CHÁVEZ

AS PART OF THE EXHIBITION: TWENTY CENTURIES OF

MEXICAN ART

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART · MAY, 1940

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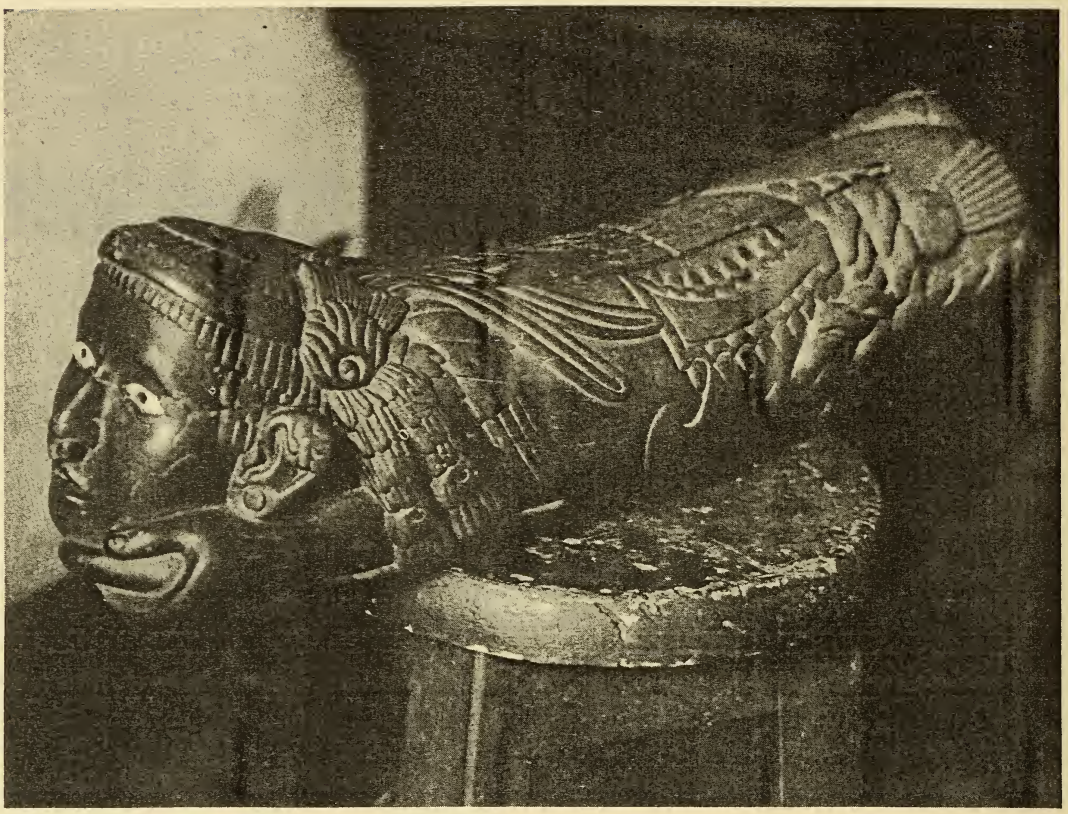

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Teponaxtle of Tlaxcala, from the National Museum of Mexico

PROGRAM

With an orchestra especially assembled, and a chorus from the National Music League.

CONDUCTORS: May 16, 17, 18 *(evenings)* — Carlos Chávez

May 17, 18 *(afternoons)* and May 19 through May 29 *(afternoons & evenings)* — Eduardo Hernández Moncada

Afternoons: 2:30 o'clock *Evenings:* 8:45 o'clock

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Acknowledgments and Notes

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The notes are based on material generously supplied by Gerónimo Baqueiro Fóster, Carlos Chávez, Blas Galindo, Candelario Huizar, Vicente Mendoza, and Luis Sandi.

The program will be broadcast from 9:00 to 10:00 P.M., May 16th, by WJZ on a national NBC Blue hookup, and by short wave to Latin America. A special broadcast of the concert will be heard on WABC and a national CBS network from 10:30 to 11:00 P.M. on May 19th; this broadcast will go by short wave to Latin America and Europe.

An album of phonograph records of the program is projected.

The photographs on pages 2, 13, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 28 and 30 are by Manuel Alvarez Bravo.

The Hammond Organ is furnished through the courtesy of the Hammond Organ Studios, Hammond Building, 50 West 57th Street, New York City.

We wish to thank Mr. Lincoln Kirstein for his generous assistance in connection with both these concerts and this book.

We wish to thank Mr. Daniel Castañeda for assistance in obtaining reproductions of ancient Mexican instruments; and the National Museum of Mexico for cooperating in the reproduction of special instruments used at these concerts.

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INTRODUCTION by Carlos Chávez

In the program of these concerts I have tried to present an idea, general but as detailed as possible, of the music of Mexico. It is necessarily a short program, briefer than that of the usual concert, for it must fit into an exhibition that includes all the Mexican arts through a period of twenty centuries. Our first problem, then, was one of selection. In making our choices, we considered first the purely musical interest of the program; our second insistent desire was to give some conception of the historic development of music in Mexico during the twenty centuries already mentioned. So that the reader and listener may decide as to how complete or imperfect our selection has been, he must first have a notion, however general, of the extent and profundity of the material which was at our disposal.

Before Europeans arrived on this continent, there flourished in Mexico civilizations or cultures which present-day archeology and history are learning to understand and relate to each other. I do not believe that anyone could separate specific musical characteristics of each of the known cultures (Archaic, Toltec, Maya, etc.) in the same way as it is possible to define separate characteristics in architecture, sculpture, and ceramics. This does not necessarily mean that such musical characteristics have ceased to exist, but only that we do not recognize them. On the other hand, we do know precisely the degree of progress which Aztec culture achieved. There are irrefutable proofs that the Aztecs did not wholly originate their musical development. It is therefore evident that their musical culture was left to them as part of the general culture of their precursors.

Among the Aztecs, music achieved the marks of a true artistic culture. It filled a role of real social importance in government, religion, and war. It was a true state institution, and was the object of special study and cultivation. In his *Monarquía Indiana*, Fray Juan de Torquemada, a Spanish missionary of the XVIth century, wrote a vivid description, from which I quote certain salient points:

> One of the principal things which they had in all this land was Songs and Dances, as much to solemnify the Fiestas of their Demons as to honor Gods whom they thought to honor in this manner and for their own joy and solace. For this reason, and because it was a thing on which they counted much in each Village, each Gentleman in his house had a Band of Musicians, with its Singers, its composers of Dances and Songs, and these, in order to show their imagination, tried to know how to arrange Songs in their manner of Meters or Couplets. And when they were good, they were kept very busy, as the Gentlemen in their Houses on many days sang in a subdued voice. Ordinarily they sang and danced in the principal Fiestas, which took place every twenty days, and in others of less importance. The Dances of most importance were in the Plazas, other times in the house of the most important Gentleman, in

his patio, for all the Gentlemen had great patios; they danced also in the houses of other Gentlemen and Leaders. When they had won some victory in War, or created a new Gentleman, or married some important Lady, or for any other occasion, the Masters composed a new Song, in addition to the usual ones which were used in the Fiestas of the Demons and of ancestral deeds. The Singers, some Days before the Fiesta, foresaw what they would have to sing. In the large Villages there were many Singers, and if there were any new songs or dances others joined them so that there would be no flaw on the day of the Fiesta. The Day they had to dance, the first thing in the morning they put a great mat in the middle of the Plaza, where the Instruments were placed, and all the musicians robed themselves in the House of the Gentleman, and came out singing and dancing. Sometimes the Dances began in the morning, and sometimes at the hour which is now that of High Mass, and at night they went around the Palace singing, and there they ended the song, and sometimes they Danced far into the night, even up to midnight. There were two Instruments. One was high and round, thicker than a Man, about five hands high of very good wood, hollow and elaborately carved. It was painted on the outside. Over the opening of this Instrument they placed the skin of a Deer which had been cured, and was stretched from the edge towards the middle. They stretched and pressed this in certain places to make the higher and lower tones. This Instrument played in tune with the singers. The other Instrument was so elaborate that I cannot explain it to you without painting it. This served as a contrabass, and they both sounded well, and you could hear them from a great distance. When the Dancers arrived at the place, they put themselves in order to play the Instruments. The two best singers, as Leaders, then began the song. The large Drum was played with the hands, and this one was called a *Huehuetl*. The other, being made differently, was played with sticks like the Instruments of Spain, and this one was called the *Teponaztli*. The Gentleman, and other Principals and Old men, went in front of the Instruments, dancing and singing. Around them another circle formed and increased the chorus. Those who moved thus in the big Villages were sometimes more than a thousand, and even sometimes more than two thousand. In addition, on the outside there was a procession of two kinds of Youths, great Dancers. The ones heading the dance were two Men alone, the best dancers, guiding the Dance. In these two circles, in the course of some turns they made, they sometimes found themselves facing members of the other circles. In other Dances, they moved with the one next to them or behind them. There were so many of these two groups of dancers that sometimes there were almost a thousand of them, and sometimes more, depending on the Villages and the Fiestas. In ancient times, before the Wars, when they celebrated their festivals with freedom, sometimes in the large Towns three or four thousand or more joined the dance, though now the population has diminished, and very few join in the dance. Wishing to begin the dance, three or four Indians raise very shrill whistles, then the Instruments sound in a low tone, and little by little increase in volume. When the dancing People hear that the Instruments have begun, they understand from the tone the kind of song and dance, and they begin. The first Songs go slowly and in a deep tone. The first is according to the Fiesta, and is always started by the two Leaders. Then the whole Chorus takes it up jointly with the Dance. This enormous group of people keeps such perfect time as do very dexterous Dancers in Spain, and what is more the whole body, the head, arms, and hands are so much in unison that there is no discrepancy of beat. If one dancer makes a step with the right foot and then the left foot, they all do the same thing and in exactly the same way. In the same manner the Instruments, the Song, and the Dancers are all in time. There is not a discrepancy. When some very good Spanish Dancers have seen this, they have despaired. And even the ones on the outside farther away, those who keep the rhythm, and the ones who work hardest in the Dance are all in unison. Those in the middle do their part more simply and their movements of the feet and body are more serious. And certainly they raise and lower their arms with much grace. Each Verse or Couplet is repeated three or four times, and they keep moving and

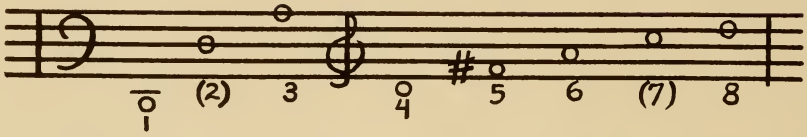
pronouncing their Song so well intoned that there is no discord. When one Song is finished, seeing that the first ones seem the longest because they go most slowly, though none of them lasts more than an hour, as soon as the Instrument changes tone, when all cease the Chant and when certain intervals have been made (in the Song but not in the dance) then the Leaders begin another Chant, a little higher and more lively. In this way the Songs keep rising and the sounds keep changing, as though someone changed from a bass to a tenor voice, or from a dance to a counter-beat. There are also some Boys who follow the dancing, the Children of the principal men, usually seven or eight years old, and sometimes four or five years old. They sing and dance with the Fathers, and as the Boys sing in a very high voice or falsetto they improve the singing very much. Sometimes these play their own Trumpets and little Flutes with few tones. Others whistle with bone whistles which make a lot of noise. Others go disguised in costume and voice, travestying other Nations and their languages. Those of whom I speak are Clowns and they make themselves conspicuous, making faces and jesting, and they make those who see and hear them laugh a great deal. Some of them imitate old women, others imitate fools. Sometimes drinks are brought to the dancers. Then some go out to rest and eat, and others take their places. In this way all are able to rest without stopping the Dance. Sometimes they bring Bunches of Roses and other Flowers or small Bouquets to carry in their hands, and Garlands which they place on their heads, in addition to the costumes they use for the dance—elaborate Mantles and plumage. Still others carry in their hands instead of Bouquets beautiful small Plumage. In these dances they wear many decorations and emblems which show which ones have been valiant in war. From the hour of vespers until night the Dances and Songs keep getting more lively and the volume gets greater all the time. The sound is more graceful, so that it seems almost like Hymns of happiness. The Instruments also increase in volume, and as there are many people dancing, it is heard far and near, especially when the Air carries the voice, and even more during the night, when everything is subdued. In order to dance at this time, they use many Lights, and certainly it is something to see.

Among the Aztecs music also played a purely lyric part. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún preserved Aztec poetry which tells us of the contemplative and delicate interior life of the Indian poets. All this poetry was sung. Its music must have been completely distinct from the military music and that of the great dance ceremonies. There was also another literary form with singing: the narrations of stories and occurrences, a form similar to the Spanish *romance* and to the music of the troubadours.

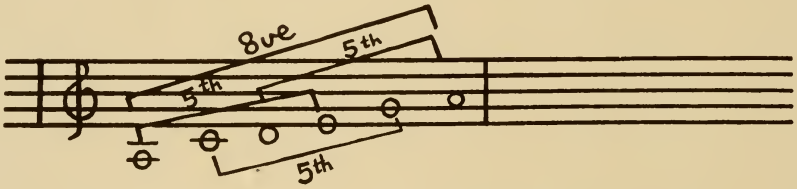
Besides the chroniclers (Torquemada, Sahagún, and many others), we have another unquestionably reliable source of information: the archeological instruments preserved in museums. The study of these instruments indicates the existence of true musical culture among the ancient Mexicans. We would ill be able to talk of musical culture among the Aztecs if we did not have proof that their music was regulated in conformity with a well-established system. The Aztecs understood and applied the natural phenomenon of harmonics. For this understanding, the sea snail's shell was of prime importance.

The antiquity of the use of the shell is not easy to determine, but it seems likely that it long antedated the Aztecs. The shells of Teotihuacán tend to prove that peoples at least as early as the Toltecs made use of it. The marine snail-shell provided a long tube serving the same purpose as in ancient Oriental cultures was served by the animal horn. In playing it — which the Indians did for perhaps thousands of years — they received

a music lesson from nature. A shell preserved in the National Museum of Mexico (see illustration, page 30) produces the following scale:



The first harmonic is not produced; those indicated between parentheses are produced with difficulty. The rest are beautifully and powerfully sounded with great ease. With this instrument, the Indians of our America discovered a natural scale, that of the so-called natural harmonics. This scale obeys a series of acoustic laws which are the basis of the musical system of the occident. The Indians based on this scale the foundation (conscious or instinctive) of a musical system using octaves, fifths, and thirds. Applying this knowledge, they obtained their pentatonic scale without semitones:



It is clear that the Indians learned this lesson well, and put it into practice consistently: not one of the Aztec instruments produces sounds outside this system. The *teponaxtle* is a cylindrical piece of wood, hollowed out to produce the sound box. Two wooden tongues, parts of the same cylinder, produce two different notes. Various archeological *teponaxtles* produce the following intervals: fifth, fourth, major third, minor third, and major second. Various museums of the world have examples of the great Indian drum called *huehuetl* (see page 12). It is of one piece, the hollowed-out trunk of a tree. A membrane is stretched over the top of the cylinder, while the bottom is left open to permit the vibrations to emerge. *Huehuetls* are constructed in many sizes. There were a multitude of percussion instruments made of various materials — bronze rattles, wooden and bone rasps called *omichicahuaztlis,* ocarinas, whistles of every size, and true flutes of clay, of which there are many examples in the National Museum of Mexico (see illustration, page 30). All of these instruments use the pentatonic scale.

How did the music produced on these instruments sound? What forms did it take? What sentiments did it express? It is easy to know what sentiments it expressed if we know the religious or military occasions it accompanied, or if we understand the poetry to which it was allied. As to its form, we will probably never arrive at a definite, unchallengeable understanding of that. For this is a question of general feeling, of penetrating the totality of Indian culture. Some light is thrown on it by the pure indigenous tradi-

tional music still heard in various remote localities in Mexico. In any case, the objective and incontrovertible data of the instruments themselves are of fundamental importance.

It will be understood that a musical tradition so strong, complete, and rooted could not easily be overthrown or supplanted. The conquistador did not combat it. From the beginning he accepted the continuation of the pagan rites, merely adapting them to Christianity. For this reason it is still possible, in the atria of many churches in small towns, and in the great religious processions, to hear the Indians playing the *huehuetl*, the *teponaxtle*, and their little flutes. Nor could the conquistador have battled against the custom of singing the traditional hymns of which we still hear some (final dance of *Los Cuatro Soles*). The military music, of course, disappeared for natural reasons.

But the conquistador brought in a real wealth of new music, new instruments, new melodies, new forms. This torrent of music began little by little to usurp the place of the aboriginal music. In this brief exposition it will only be possible to mention, without comment, the general lineaments of the music brought into Mexico by the Spaniards.

I. In the first place, there was music for religious services, of which the most important was plainsong, which was taught to the Indians from the first days of the Conquest. Catholic music in Mexico followed the same course as in other parts of the world, in accordance with papal regulations. Its general influence throughout Mexico was as enormous as the power of the Church itself.

II. Popular and peasant music and dances were introduced by the Spaniards (coming from many districts of Spain) into all the chief regions of Mexico. From this source our peasant dances, such as the *jarabe*, the *huapango*, and many others, probably come. Practically all the music known under the generic name of *son* shows a Spanish origin.

III. The Spanish *romance* was widely diffused at an early date. It took root because of its resemblance to native Indian songs, and has become the Mexican *corrido*.

IV. The profane songs and dances of picaresque character — the gay street songs, and even those of the courtly festivals — must have had enormous importance, if we can judge by the testimony taken during innumerable trials conducted by the Inquisition for the sin of singing, playing, and dancing unchurchly music. We can find a concrete example in the invention in Mexico, in the XVIth century, of the *pavan*, which takes its name and its aspect of gallantry from the courtship of the turkey (*pavo*).

V. During the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries the viceregal court maintained a royal orchestra which played European chamber music.

VI. At the beginning of the XVIIIth century, opera reached a high stage of development in Mexico. All the leading Italian, Spanish, and even French companies held long seasons, not only in Mexico City, but in other large towns of the country. Operatic music had an enormous general influence, as may be seen today in the huge number of songs of Italian cut and flavor, descendants of the Italian aria or *romanza*.

Conclusion: by the phrase "Mexican music" we mean the Indian music of the ancient

Mexicans; the music of Spanish or other origin implanted in Mexico, and, finally, the production in Mexico of a mixture of these elements. The Indian branch and the Spanish branch differ in that Indian music from the Conquest on remained static, while Spanish music has undergone constant evolution. By way of Spain there came to Mexico Italian, German, French, and Moorish-Arabic music. More recently, in the XIXth century, when communications were improved, and the world became smaller, and localities less local and more universal, influences came from everywhere. It must be added that along the entire coast of the Gulf of Mexico the music of Negro slaves from Africa has had important influence.

In what form and to what degree has a new music, characteristic of Mexico, been produced from the sum of these elements? This is a question which cannot readily be answered. The best response is the program which the Museum of Modern Art is presenting, and the best answer will be that of the listeners.

Here I take the liberty of making a few general observations. Mexican music is largely the product of a mixture of influences, that is, of crossbreeding. This mixed ancestry, chiefly Indo-Spanish, is never found to be in exact proportions of half and half. In the majority of cases, one basic element is altered by the other in a proportion much smaller than fifty per cent.

The Indian music best preserving its purity is not what remains of Aztec culture, but that of more or less primitive or nomad tribes which never, properly speaking, achieved a culture. Such are the Yaquis, the Seris, and the Huicholes.

I do not think that the qualities of Mexican music depend on its proportion of Indian and Spanish ancestry, but on the existence of many new, local factors — historical, geographic, and ethnic circumstances which work directly on the artistic phenomenon. The reader himself, having an idea of the wealth of material, can judge the place and meaning of each number on the program in relation to Mexican music as a whole.

Before concluding this introductory note, there is one other point, perhaps the most important, that I should like to take up: the form in which this music is presented at these concerts. With the exception of Aldana's Mass and my own pieces, none of it was originally intended for concert presentation. It was therefore necessary to find an instrumental ensemble which could be used differently in different numbers. This raised the problem of form. The *mariachi* and *huapango sones*, for instance, are sung and played for hours on end. Their form is prolix, their melodic and rhythmic constituents obstinately repeated, their keys insufficiently varied and contrasted. They are a rich source of new and various material, but diluted through hours and hours of music. We had to concentrate this diluted essence into a compact form, at the same time preserving its original unity. We had to arrive at a less insistent and much more varied continuity without marring the resulting piece by a succession of unrelated elements.

The melodies and rhythms, though distinct, always have a close relationship to each

other, belong to a natural family. It was not possible to work by rule, but it was possible to solve each problem instinctively. One melody calls for another to balance it, and that one still another. The same is true of rhythms and tonalities. The *Sones Mariachi* of Blas Galindo, for example, is a highly developed, true sonata movement, and the music, far from losing character, has been intensified. The *Huapangos* of Gerónimo Baqueiro Fóster is an extraordinary example of free variations entirely in the popular manner. The method of presenting the *Canción* (of *Marcha, Vals, Canción*) is another entirely different case. Respecting the binary form it originally had, we have added one or two closely related motives, the first serving as a sort of round-refrain, the other as a coda. The Yaqui Music of Luis Sandi is a clear case of the unity of a work being produced by natural affinity among the motives. This is also true of the *Corridos Mexicanos* of Vicente Mendoza. On the harmonic and contrapuntal levels, the works presented in this program retain their original complexion.

It is my hope that the inspiration which originally gave rise to this music may arrive here, living and fresh across the intervening years and miles.

Translated by Herbert Weinstock

Carlos Chávez, Eduardo Hernández Moncada (seated left) and members of the orchestra, with Indian instruments, during a rehearsal in the Auditorium of the Museum

Huehuetl from the National Museum of Mexico

I. XOCHIPILI—MACUILXOCHITL

Xochipili-Macuilxochitl was the Aztec god of music, the dance, flowers, and love. His name was chosen by Carlos Chávez as the title of this piece because its very sound (it is pronounced exactly as spelled, x sounding like a sibilant s, i like a long e) seems to evoke the flavor of an ancient Indian culture.

This music is not based on archeological melodies or quotations from true pre-Conquest music, for no records of such melodies or music exist. As Carlos Chávez points out in the introduction to these notes, however, careful study has been made of Aztec instruments and combinations of instruments. The scale they produce is accurately known. Their expressive possibilities have been explored in the light of what is known of Aztec culture in general, through its architecture, literature, and sculpture, and the chronicles of the conquistadors.

Full advantage has been taken in the creation of this piece of the completely novel sonorous possibilities offered by Aztec instruments. As might be expected, then, the result is in effect a new, rather than an old-fashioned, music. Carlos Chávez states clearly that *Xochipili-Macuilxochitl* is not an actual reconstruction of pre-Conquest music, but that he believes that it offers a general impression of how that ancient Mexican music must have sounded.

The special orchestra used for this piece consists of copies of archeological instruments and, in one case, the nearest modern equivalent to such an instrument — the original being impractical in an ensemble under modern concert conditions. It includes flutes, *teponaxtle, huehuetls* of various sizes, rasps of wood and bone, many rattles, and (to approximate the sound made by blowing into a sea snail's shell) a trombone.

Ancient Mexican musicians, from the Codex Florentinus

II. SONES MARIACHI

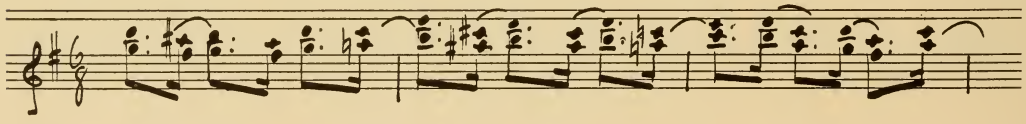
Mariachi is the name given to an instrumental ensemble found chiefly in the Mexican State of Jalisco, and to a lesser extent and in varied form in Colima, Michoacán, Nayarit, and even Mexico City itself. Fundamentally, a *mariachi* consists of two violins, a large five-stringed guitar, a small guitar, and a five-octave harp. In modern ensembles, the harp is frequently omitted, while clarinet and trumpet are added. The name is of unknown derivation, the most plausible suggestion advanced thus far being that it is an adaptation of the French word *mariage*. For though the instruments themselves are of Spanish provenance so far as Mexico is concerned, this ensemble seems to have first been called *mariachi* during the French occupation in the early 1860's, and to have taken part in wedding festivities.

The characteristic music of a *mariachi*, like that played during a *huapango*, is called a *son*, though *mariachis* also accompany the popular ballads known as *corridos*, as well as *canciónes*. The *son mariachi* is frequently a type of primitive round. It is both sung and danced. If the occasion is a religious fiesta, the *mariachi* is likely to take up its place at the door of the church. For secular festivities, such as weddings, birthday parties, celebrations of memorable dates, or gaieties attending a good harvest, however, it usually plays out of doors in an arbor of branches or wide banana leaves.

The *son mariachi* is basically rhythmic, of complex and intertwining beats. Its harmonic structure is simple, moving from tonic to dominant and back, and seldom touching the subdominant. The singers are always the men who play the instruments. They use a high falsetto voice, and traditionally keep a third or a sixth apart. The verses sung are almost invariably gay, frequently picaresque in character.

The instrumentalist-singers likewise dance. Never moving on heel or toe, they keep their feet flat to the ground. Movement is confined almost entirely to the legs, and particular point is made of not moving the head at all. A specialty of some *mariachi* dancers in Vera Cruz is a number in which a bottle is balanced on top of the head.

The *Sones Mariachi* of these programs was arranged by Blas Galindo, a young full-blooded Indian from Jalisco, native home of the *mariachi*. It is in G major, in 6/8 time, and is based largely on a popular *son* called *La Negra*, into which, as variation, Galindo has introduced two other *sones*, *El Zopilote* and *Los Cuatro Reales*. Galindo remarks that though the piece has wide rhythmic variety it has a unity of effect, for even when the melodic themes vary, the rhythmic and harmonic resemblance prevents any loss of a sense of continuity. A fragment of the principal melody is given here:



III. CORRIDOS MEXICANOS

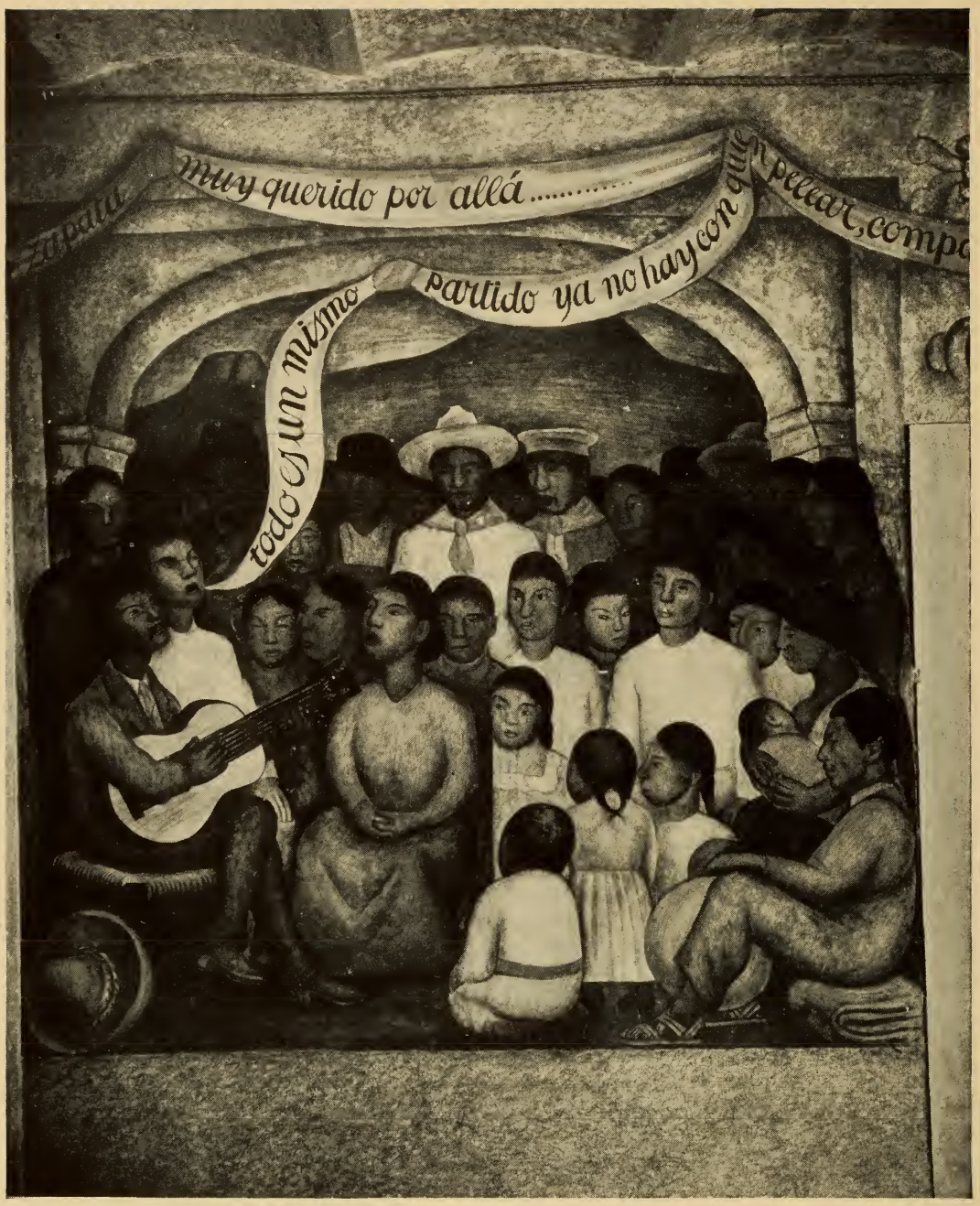
The modern Mexican *corrido* is a true folk ballad. Its simple, artless, narrative verses have long served, particularly in remote sections of Mexico, in lieu of newspaper, post, telegraph, and newsreel. Professional *corrido* singers, arriving in a remote village, bring in the only available news of the outside world. Similarly, it is from these singers that other parts of the world learn of the occurrences in remote mountain fastnesses and desert plains. Printed versions of these ballads have served to spread and perpetuate highly colored retellings of crimes, violent deaths, bandit raids, natural catastrophies, railroad wrecks, wars, and heroic deeds.

The texts of the *corridos*, marked off by assonance or rhyme into strophes of four, six, or eight verses, commonly of eight syllables to a line, are usually the anonymous creations of the musician who sings them. However, some of these verses have been polished by passing time into a variety of set versions. They frequently begin with an invitation to listen, and end with a farewell strophe of thanks, stating that such and such a story has been told. Recently, students of the *corrido* have come to know some of the best present-day *corrido* singers, and are thus able to add an author's name to a few of the ballads.

The word *corrido* seems to be a corruption of the Spanish *corrida*, from *correr* (to run), and thus refers to the manner in which the song runs on indefinitely without change. The form is descended from the Spanish *romance*, which flourished most brilliantly during the XIVth, XVth, and XVIth centuries in Andalusia and Estremadura, the two sections of the mother country from which a majority of the conquistadors came. The earliest Mexican example that can be dated has a printed text issued in Mexico City on August 19, 1684. Called *Coplas al "Tapado,"* it tells of the decapitation of one Antonio de Benavides, who emigrated to Mexico from Spain to pursue a devious career until restrained by the law. *Corridos* continued to appear throughout the Colonial period, and reached their biggest development just after Mexico became a republic, when Centralists and Federalists were locked in protracted civil strife. They still play an important part in the lives of unsophisticated Mexicans in all parts of the country except Yucatán, Campeche, Chiapas, and Quintana Roo, and have spread to colonies of Mexicans in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. The *corrido* is particularly fertile and pure in Michoacán, home of the Tarascan Indians.

Corridos are sung at fairs and fiestas, or in village plazas to loiterers and passers-by. A lone guitarist may do the singing, or he may be joined by a woman who will also vend sheets of colored paper containing the printed words of his most popular ballads. Less often, two men may sing, or even be joined by a woman. When there are two voices the interval between them is most commonly a third or a tenth.

The musical form of the *corrido* is dictated by its simple literary form. Although



Corrido singer, fresco by Diego Rivera in the Secretariat of Public Education, Mexico City

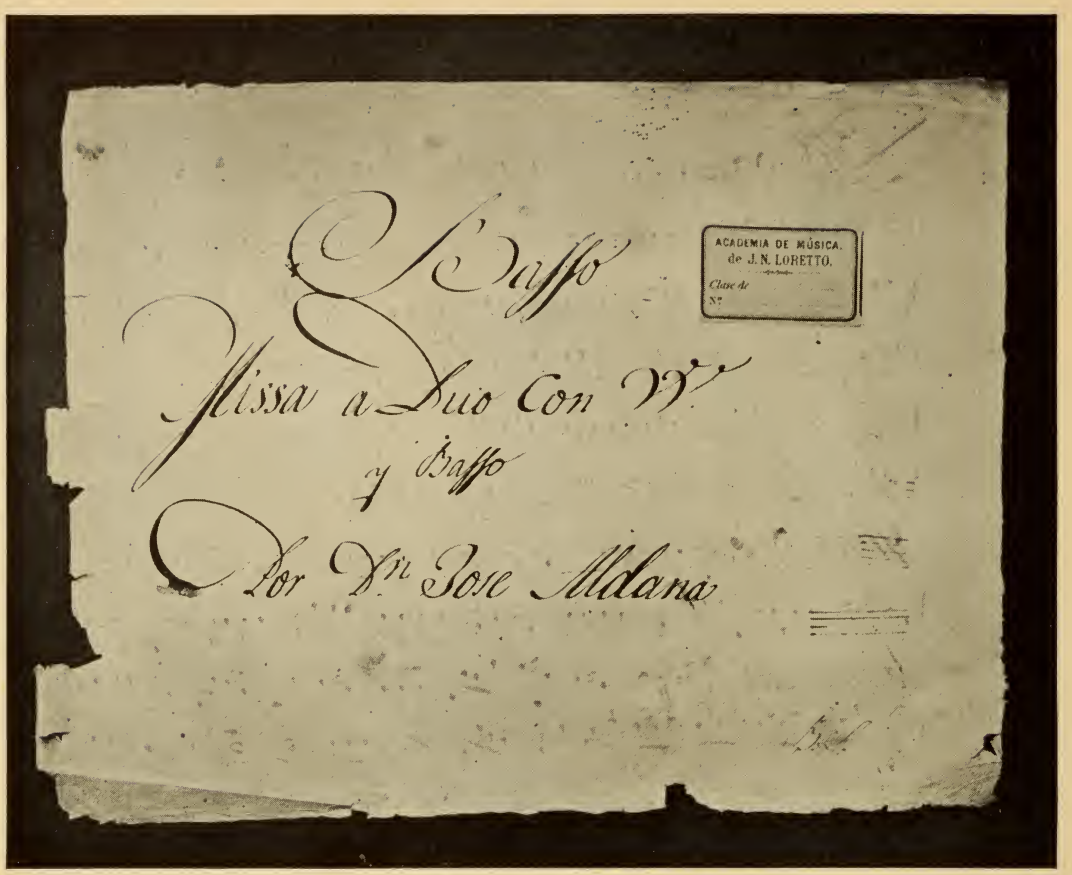
considerable ingenuity and variety are often displayed within the verse, its substantial regularity results in an unquestionable monotony in the music, which consists of a melodic phrase repeated indefinitely until the story is completed. Usually in a kind of simple or combined triple time (3/8, 6/8, 9/8), the melody often has two strong beats, each divided into three sub-beats, giving the effect of rapid waltz-time. Examples of other rhythms are found, 2/4, 4/4, and even 5/8 and 7/8 time having been noted. The melodies are usually confined within a range of one octave, and are preponderantly diatonic and major.

As a rich lode of material on folkways, the *corrido* has been minutely studied in Mexico, where authorities divide the collected examples into romantic, tragic, didactic, picaresque, and other categories, some with reference to the type of verse-form used. Vicente Mendoza, a profound student of *corridos,* based the *Corridos Mexicanos* of these programs on the following: *El Casamiento del Huiltacoche* (Michoacán), *El Tigre de Alica* (Zacatecas), *Los Dorados* (Chihuahua), *El Caballito* (Puebla), *La Sandía* (Michoacán), *El Toloache* (Zacatecas), *Don Lucas* (Jalisco), and two unassigned melodies — *El Coyote Viejo* and *El Caballo Criollo.*

IV. MASS by Don José Aldana

The manuscript copy of this XVIIIth century Mass was discovered by Candelario Huizar and his assistants in the archives of the National Conservatory of Music in Mexico City in April, 1940. Its composer, Don José Aldana, is identifiable by sparse biographical data. His birthplace and birth date are alike unknown. In 1786, he was a second violinist in the orchestra of the Coliseo in Mexico City. In 1790-91, he was director of the same orchestra though he continued to function as a violinist. Saldívar, in his *History of Music in Mexico,* calls Aldana "the ablest violinist of his time." As late as 1808-09 he was still an orchestral violinist, a function he combined with those of teaching and of rehearsing the band of the Colegio de Infantes. He died on February 7, 1810, the year of Mexico's first unsuccessful rebellion against Spain. Aldana was a prolific composer: the archives of the Cathedral of Mexico City contain many of his religious works. An examination of the Mass sung at these concerts indicates that he was familiar with the music of Handel and Mozart, probably through performances by the royal orchestra playing at the viceregal court. In addition to strongly Handelian passages, the Mass has the intermittent gaiety for which solemn musicologists have criticized many of the religious pieces of Haydn and Mozart.

This Mass was composed so that it could be sung any day of the year, and therefore consists solely of the four sections of the Ordinary: the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, and Sanc-



First page of the bass part of the manuscript Mass, by Don José Aldana (XVIIIth century), as recovered in Mexico City in April, 1940

tus. It follows the tradition of singing the texts of the Benedictus and Agnus Dei to the music of the Sanctus.

The Mass makes little use of the system of thematic development so highly evolved in European compositions of the same period. The melodies themselves are notably original, some of them (particularly the one at the introduction of the Gloria) showing specific *criollo*, or Mexican-Spanish, color. The simple harmonic scheme is treated with masterly finesse, and avoids commonplaces. Variety is achieved throughout separate sections by means of striking contrasts between orchestra and chorus. As the work of a self-taught composer — most Mexican composers of the XVIIIth century had little formal training — Aldana's Mass well represents Mexican religious music of the late viceregal period.

V. MARCHA, VALS, CANCIÓN

The March of the title is the most popular of all Mexican military marches, *La Marcha de Zacatecas;* the Waltz is *Club Verde*, a musically more interesting brother to the world-famed *Sobre las Olas (Over the Waves)*, while the Song is an international favorite, *La Adelita.* The first two certainly, the third probably, come down to us from the repertoire of the ubiquitous Mexican battalion bands of the "Victorian" period of Porfirio Díaz. In the center of the plaza of almost every Mexican town and city, to this day, an iron kiosk gives testimony of the once regular band concerts which were the very nucleus of community social entertainment. The army, naturally, was everywhere, and so was its music, of which *La Marcha de Zacatecas* and *Club Verde* were constant favorites. *La Adelita,* however, did not become a universal Mexican possession until the 1910 Revolution, as is testified to by its well-known words, which have reference to the exploits of a *soldadera* following one of the revolutionary armies. *Club Verde* and *La Adelita* are anonymous, but *La Marcha de Zacatecas* was composed by one Codina, of whom little is known.

The *Marcha* and *Vals* represent the Mexican XIXth century in full flower, while *La Adelita* may be said to echo the breakdown of that rather fulsome period, which was all but completely obliterated by the Revolution of 1910.

VI. HUAPANGOS

Huapango is the name of a type of fiesta celebrated in the States of Vera Cruz, Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosí, Hidalgo, Tabasco, and Puebla, particularly along the shores of the Gulf of Mexico and in the adjacent tropical lowlands. It consists of instrumental music, singing, and dancing. The word *huapango* is derived either from Nahuatl

Huapango musicians, State of Vera Cruz

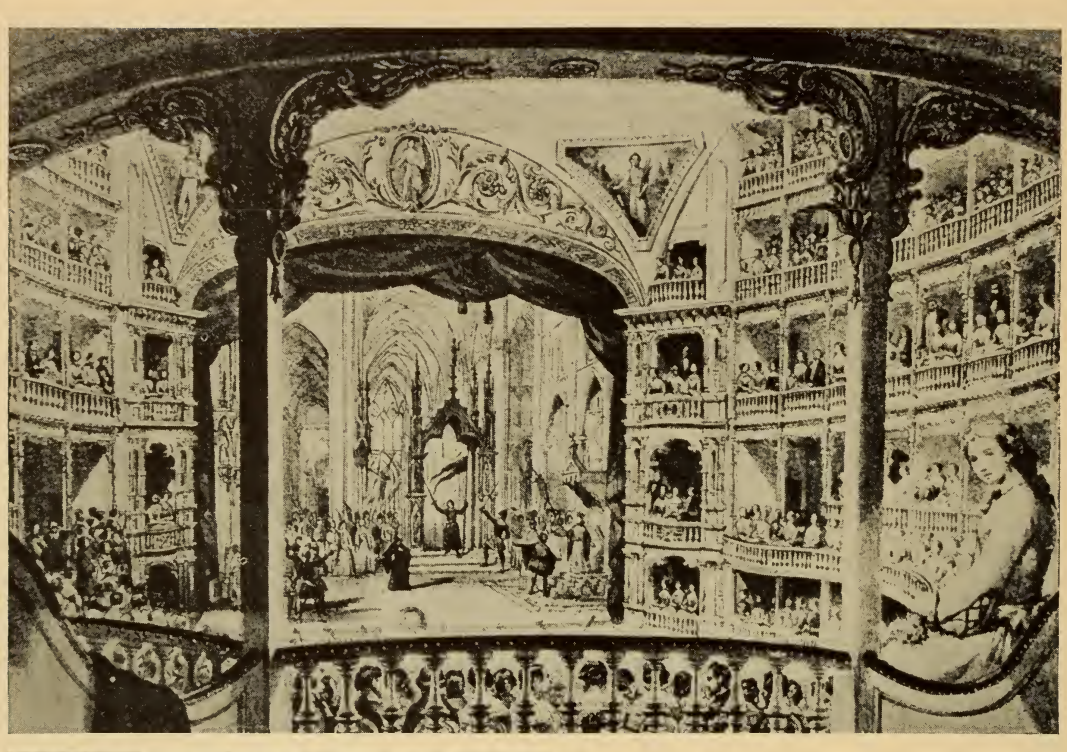
vocables signifying "on a wooden place," referring to the platform on which the dancing is done, or from Huaxtecas de Pango—Huaxtecas being the indigenes of the tropical lowlands, Pango the ancient name of the river now called Pánuco. As present-day Huastecans use *huapango* with reference to the entire fiesta, and do not connect it with the platform alone, the second derivation is accepted as more likely.

Whole communities participate in *huapangos*, only the instrumentalists being professionals. In its purest form, the music, called a *son*, was played on a tiny five-stringed guitar and a harp. (This type is still closely approximated at Alvarado, the fishing village just south of Vera Cruz in which Paul Strand's *The Wave* was filmed.) In the more or less hybrid and decadent forms in which the music is usually heard today, this ensemble has widened to include large four- and six-stringed guitars and violins.* Rhythm, constantly created by instrumentalists, singers, and dancers, is the most important element in this music, and is infinitely varied. Most *sones* are in 3/4, 2/4, or 6/8 time, often rapidly alternating, and even combined. The melodies, almost certainly derived from XVIth century Spanish music, are not likely to be used in more than one locality, or even by more than one singer: they are personal and seem improvisatory. The harmonies are likewise of such ever-shifting complexity, such variety from region to region — and even ranch to ranch — that simple definitive statements about them are all but impossible.

The singing of a *son* is done by the community, divided into groups and soloists of special abilities. The verses are made up of rhyming stanzas of four, five, six, or ten lines. All but a few of them deal with two universal subjects: women and nature. They are romantic, insinuating, often humorous, and almost never weakly sentimental; incline, in truth, to burlesque the sentimental.

The dancing of a *huapango* is done on a high wooden platform. A man and woman, pairs of men and women, or women alone, are the principal dancers, though children and the village elders may join in if sufficiently talented and strong. The steps are fast and dazzlingly complicated in rhythm. In certain popular *sones*, trick steps are traditional. In *La Bamba* (the music of which has an unmistakable Negro tang), the dancer, to gain applause, balances a glass of water on his head without spilling a drop. Or the man may loop a silk scarf with his feet without losing the rhythm. If successful in this difficult trick, he places the looped scarf on the head of a chosen girl — very often with important results in their lives. As a genre, the *huapango* reflects the vivacious gaiety of the inhabitants of the Gulf coast of Mexico, so different in their laughter and song from the more somber Mexican of highland and desert.

**Huapangos*, arranged by Gerónimo Baqueiro Fóster for these concerts, is based on *sones* from localities in which a deep four-stringed guitar is employed.



Contemporary lithograph of the opera house, Mexico City, in the middle XIXth century

XIXth century Mexican military musicians, from a contemporary photograph

VII. LA PALOMA AZUL

La Paloma Azul (The Blue Dove) is based on a XIXth century Mexican *canción* of that name. The exact original source of its music is impossible to determine. Perhaps it is a much-changed version of one of the many Spanish songs that have drifted into Mexico across the years. Carlos Chávez leans to the theory that it is more recently descended from Italian opera, which was enormously popular throughout Mexico in the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries. It is easy to feel that it had its beginnings, or at least its pattern, in some Italian aria or *romanza.*

The Mexican people must have felt a need for a simple form in which to express their personal sorrows and sentimental heartbreaks. The *canción* would seem to indicate that part of the popularity of Italian opera in their country was due to their having found that form in the sweetest of its airs, a type of song they have gradually remade in the light of their own sentiments and character.

Beginning with lines in which a lover, who is leaving for Laredo, says good-by to his sweetheart, the *canción* breaks again and again into a slightly varied refrain, which I give here in free translation: "What a beautiful blue dove, which with its wings flies where it wishes! What a lovely blue dove! Do not have too much to do with anyone. Open your wings. I am the keeper of your love." It concludes with a verse saying, "Now with this I bid you adieu, my love, by tipping the brim of my hat, and here ends the singing, my love, of the little verses of Laredo."

VIII. YAQUI MUSIC

In the State of Sonora, on the shores of the Yaqui River and on the beaches of the Gulf of Cortés, two Indian tribes live: the Yaquis and the Seris. These are tribes which have for many centuries lived in the same region. Without any doubt they represent the beginning of the long trek of the Nahuas to the center of Mexico. Their culture, on the other hand, does not seem to have changed since those remote days. That is to say, part of their culture, for they are now bicultured and bilingual: the fact that they use both guns and arrows is very significant along this line.

The archaic part of their culture corresponds to that of nomad hunters. Their music is pentatonic among the Yaquis, and in even smaller scales among the Seris. The most popular dance among the Yaquis is *El Venado (The Deer)*, a totemic dance in which the hunting and killing of a deer are represented.

The significance which the music of these tribes has for the new Mexican musical

Yaqui musicians. Note cocoon rattles on dancer's ankles, antlers for Deer Dancer, water gourd, rasps supported on halves of calabash

Tenabari, butterfly cocoon rattles worn by Yaqui dancer-musician

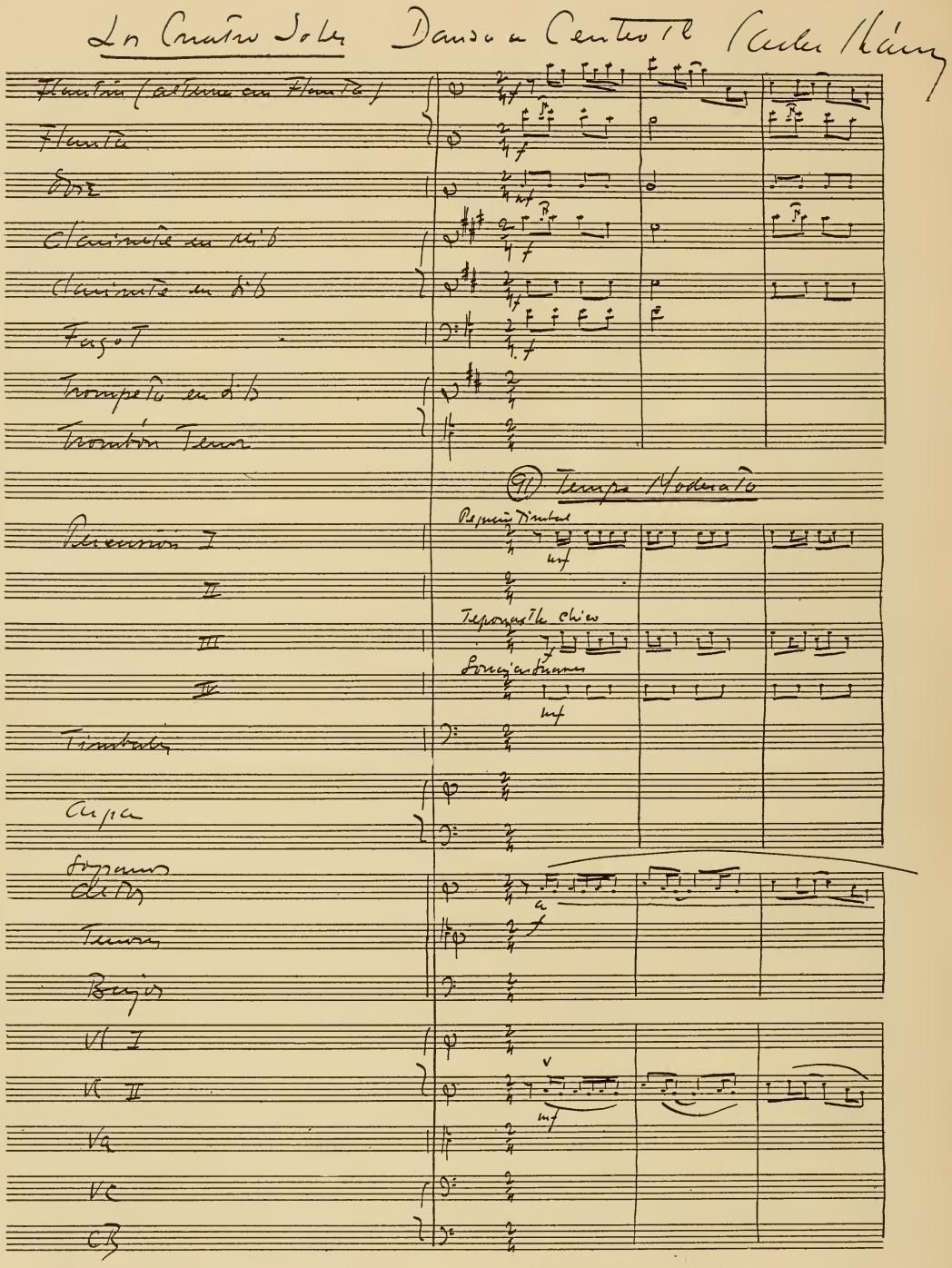
movement initiated by Carlos Chávez is great, for it is of an undeniable archaic type. That is to say, it is certainly indigenous to Mexico, and is still used by the Indians of today. These two facts destroy the objections with which the Europeanism of the earlier musicians defends itself against the new movement: that the Indian does not exist in music, that he has only an archeological interest.

Beyond its theoretic significance, this music has the double practical importance of being beautiful and of leading Mexican music along a truly catholic path — for only that which has all the elements of a nationality and an epoch can acquire universal quality.

Luis Sandi's first contact with this music was ten or so years ago, when a regiment of Yaqui soldiers arrived in Mexico City. A group of musicians was invited to hear their music and see their dances in the barracks where they were quartered. It was there that for the first time he heard the music that may be called the living voice of an ancient culture, and could see the Deer Dance which is without doubt the most beautiful done by Mexican Indians.

That which principally impressed Luis Sandi was the fact that the Yaquis had a veritable orchestra of percussion instruments. They accompany the Deer Dance with the following instruments: the double-membraned Yaqui drum; a wooden rasp supported on half a calabash and rubbed with a hardwood stick; seed rattles, calabashes full of small stones and pieces of wood; a species of sistrum; a water gourd, half a calabash placed mouth down in a recipient full of water and struck with a stick of wood covered with dried corn leaves; necklaces from which hang a lot of deer hooves, and bunches of dried butterfly cocoons full of pebbles — these last worn around the ankles of the dancers (see page 24). All this complicated orchestra of percussion accompanies a clay flute or a singer, alternating in the melodies of the dance. The flautist simultaneously plays the little drum, the singer the rasp. The Yaqui manner of singing resembles that of the majority of peoples of ancient culture. In the expression of the Egyptian singers of the Old Kingdom we can recognize this way of singing, still habitual among the Arabs: the sounds are always sharp, produced by a great effort, with the mouth hardly opened to emit the voice; the face remains immobile while the effort seems almost to burst the neck.

The work played at these concerts is made up of Yaqui and Seri instrumental and song themes. The instrumental Yaqui themes are sometimes diatonic, sometimes pentatonic; those that are sung are always pentatonic. They have, in spite of being constructed on a European scale, Indian characteristics that are not just Mexican, but continental, as, for instance, the appoggiaturas at an interval of a minor third are likewise found in Inca music. The second theme of the slow movement is constructed on only three notes, which does not prevent it from having great expressive value. The rhythmic constitution of the work is exuberant, as is usual in all music which is not limited by the bar line.



Manuscript first page of *Danza a Centeotl*, second of the two dances from *Los Cuatro Soles*, by Carlos Chávez

Originally, each percussion instrument carried a distinct rhythm, and the melody changed time freely. Both characteristics have been preserved as far as possible in Luis Sandi's piece.

He has also respected the harmonic essence of this music, not using in it notes other than those contained in the scale on which it is constructed. In the first and last movements there is practically no harmony: the dynamic constructions of the rhythm are developed above a static concord.

IX. LOS CUATRO SOLES—TWO DANCES

In 1921 Carlos Chávez first had the idea of writing Indian music, or, rather, music of Indian inspiration. He was working on a ballet. Mexico was then passing through a period which has with reason been called a renascence. The so-called Mexican Renascence was a trifle chauvinistic, and led to unnecessary exaggerations. But it did have results of great importance: it led young Mexican musicians to discover Mexican tradition in its full extent; it made them realize the natural affinity between their inspiration and their ancestral music, and it made them consider their position in relation to the great European classics.

Any truly Mexican tradition was unknown, hidden away. The most distinguished Mexican musicians of the last generations did nothing but repeat badly the music of the European schools. The native imagination was silenced by the academic dictates of the "maestros." These dicta were that there was no tradition but that inherited from Europe, and that the music of Mexico itself was poor and barbarous. It was necessary to rebel, to demonstrate the enormous richness of Mexico's legitimate tradition, in the first place that of the pre-Cortesian civilizations.

Nothing has ever impressed Carlos Chávez more than the religious fiestas of the Indians, true pagan rites, which he saw during his childhood, almost as a participant. He has never forgotten the ancient rhythms of the *huehuetl* played by venerable Indians with the dignity and solemnity of their most remote ancestors. The *chirimías* of today produce the same notes as the ancient flutes which they have replaced, and are undoubtedly played in the same spirit today as in ancient times. Then too, the melodies, dances, and songs of Spain, transformed by the Mexican spirit are a music both rich and varied which has acquired coloration related to the different parts of Mexico.

"Our whole being is moved by this music," Chávez says. "In it we find ourselves. Its essence corresponds to our emotions. Its expressive qualities are related to our character and our unrest."

It was not Chávez' intention that the young musicians should become mere rear-

Indians in costume for the *Danza de las Pastoras*

rangers of this music. But a great problem remained: folk music is always limited, of reduced scope harmonically, melodically, and instrumentally (it is enormously rich rhythmically). On the other hand, there was their own historical position as men of greater evolution, benefiters by the lessons of the European classics, possessors of superior forms of organized and logical complexity. There is the contradiction. There was the problem. And there, they felt, was their place. The problem was great, but fecund, its solution a challenge. They were not going to regress from the instrumental and harmonic advances of Europe. They were not going to negate the larger forms that had been evolved in universal music. They intended to take advantage of the experience of the great classics, but to nourish themselves at the sources of native traditions.

It was amidst the stir of all these ideas and uncertainties that, in 1921, Chávez composed his first Mexican ballet, *El Fuego Nuevo.* Three or four years later, he wrote another Mexican ballet, *Los Cuatro Soles.*

These two ballets were based on legends of the ancient Mexicans, which is why Chávez called them "Mexican ballets."

Los Cuatro Soles is based on a Mexican legendary explanation of prehistory. It divides time into four epochs, or *soles* (suns): the first destroyed by a deluge; the second by glacial winds; the third by volcanic fire — the fourth, of course, being the continuing present. The destructions, interpreted as punishments sent by the gods, show a certain understanding, however imperfect, of the geologic periods of the earth.

The importance of these legends (which are of course related to legends found in many other countries), is in the vigor of their expression, their high drama. It is in their feeling of great superior powers, of the natural elements — water, air, fire, and earth — in their positive or creative, and negative or destructive aspects, of great fears, great superstitions, of the position of men in the cosmos.

The music of the ancient Mexicans, of implacable, profound rhythm, elemental and mysterious — still to be heard among the Indians of today; the legends that are fountains of feeling and drama; the paintings, sculpture, and monumental architecture of the primitive Mexicans living and dead (but even then living within the present-day Mexican) — all this fed the inspiration of Chávez and his colleagues toward the creation of a living art which may truly be called Mexican.

In these concerts two dances from *Los Cuatro Soles,* connected by a brief interlude, are being played. The first deals with the earliest *sol,* or epoch, and ends dramatically with the deluge. The second is a ritual dance of adoration of Centeotl, the goddess of maize. It is a dance of praise for the abundance and fertility of the earth. This is the only section of the ballet in which use is made of musical themes Chávez had heard used by Indians in their religious dances of our own times, particularly in the *Danza de las Pastoras* (see pages 26 and 28).

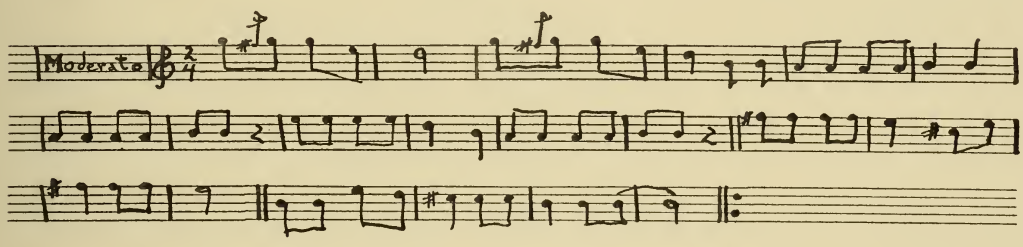
Chávez heard the melodies given below among the Mazahua Indians of the State

Ancient instruments from the National Museum of Mexico. The inset picture from the Codex Florentinus represents many of the same instruments

of Mexico. Their distinction, their originality leave no doubt that they are traditional and of very ancient origin. They show no traces of Spanish or other European influence of any sort.

The melodic motives in both dances are numerous. They appear and reappear in the course of the dances in a constant line. Nevertheless, their common descent and the constant reappearance of basic elements made it possible to achieve unity in the work as a whole.

A list of important themes of the final dance follows:



The Two-Eagle Design, from the antique *panhuehuetl* of Tenango

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